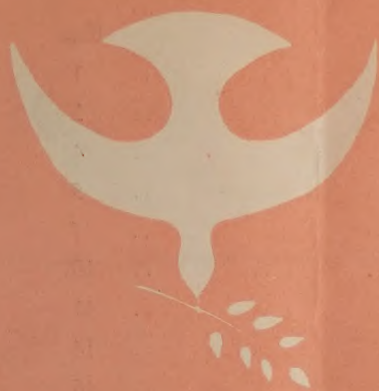


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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● APRIL 1993

HE IS RISEN INDEED



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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

APRIL 1993

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REV. P. C. DASS BABU

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25 Years Ago!

Our Lord at the last supper put an end to a dispute over precedence by washing the feet of the disciples. He rebuked them: 'Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves'. It was a dramatic reminder of what he had said: 'I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister—to serve'. Saint Augustine used to sign letters, *Augustinus servus servorum Christi*—'servant of the servants of Christ'. That is a good definition of a minister. But when the servant has proven his devotion by obedience, he is raised to the dignity of a free man, a friend of Christ.

—Churchman 1957

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Renew the Reminiscences of the Cross

REV. JUSTIN CHARLES, *Trivandrum*

'The third day He rose again from the dead' is the Easter message. This message asserts that, not in vain did God humble Himself in His Son; by so doing He assuredly acted also for His own honour and for the confirmation of His Glory. At the humiliation of God himself the exaltation of Jesus Christ had taken place. But what actually involved was the exaltation of man. In Jesus Christ man is exalted and appointed to the life which God has set him free in the death of Jesus Christ. God has so to speak abandoned the sphere of His Glory and man may now take this place. That is the Easter message—the goal of reconciliation, man's redemption. It is the goal which was already visible on Good Friday. As Easter is the time when the Christian Church focuses its attention mainly on the work of Jesus a re-examination of the importance and relevance of the Cross in this century of modernism will not be out of place.

We are faced with a problem; Is Cross a sign of humiliation or glorification? The writers of the first three gospels give the picture of the cross to be one of humiliation primarily and glory follows the humiliation. But, St. John clearly points out that the Cross itself is glorification (3 : 14, 8 : 28, 12 : 32, 17 : 1). This shows that Cross and Resurrection and Ascension are closely interrelated. Resurrection and ascension cannot be spoken of without cross. Cross affirms that glorification is the reward that one gains when a person gives himself away for a better cause. Then, why is cross a humiliation? Jesus was crucified between two common bandits. The self styled keepers of law and the 'law abiding citizens' who passed by mocked at him. The soldiers after cruelly scourging and treating him with contempt cast lots for his clothing. On the road to Calvary the experiences that Jesus had were that of a serious criminal. Therefore it must necessarily be a case of humiliation. But, what happened later was contrary to the calculations and expectations of the so-called religious men of the time. The picture of Jesus on the cross has been one of dignity, forgiveness, compassion and triumph. Hence the momentous experience of humiliation immediately turned to be a manifestation of glorification. This demands to examine the speciality of the Cross.

In Christ's Cross we are invited to realise the magnitude, intensity and weight of our sin in what our forgiveness cost. To say in its strict sense, we do not have the knowledge of our sin except in the light of Christ's Cross. It makes us certain that in order that we are acquitted of sins and its consequences a price had already been paid on our behalf. Cross makes us confident that we have nothing more to pay.

Again, only in the light of the Cross of Christ one can understand the meaning of Grace. It is free and unmerited love of God for humanity. As far as the recipient is concerned the Grace is free in the sense that it flows

incessantly to him even without he puts any effort to channelise it to him. It appears that God does not establish any precondition. If at all we find God making any demand in return for the Grace He gives to man it is nothing more than asking him to 'walk before me, and be blameless' (Gen. 17 : 1). While we take it to be a free gift from God it should be noted that it is costly too. This view is supported by the words of Jesus himself. Jesus said, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' (Lk. 9 : 23). It stresses the obligations of discipleship which are loyalty, self-denial and obedience even to death. It teaches about our willingness to take upon ourselves the shame and humiliation that Jesus took on our behalf. Again Jesus demanded the rich ruler who came to him seeking to inherit eternal life, '... Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Lk. 18 : 22). When Jesus put this demand before that rich ruler, he revealed the need of a change in the attitude towards the poor and outcast. Also it teaches about self-surrender which is very difficult for a person to accept. Thus the Grace which is a free gift of God to man, 'sologratia' becomes costly on the part of man. It is costly on the side of God too because the burden that God had to bear to set the man free from bondage has no parallel in the human history. The best proof is Jesus' own words as recorded in Mt. 26 : 37-39, Mk. 14 : 33-36, and Lk. 22 : 41-44 which speak about the inner struggle and agony that Jesus had experienced at Gethsemane. Therefore, it can well be argued that Grace of God is both free and costly when we look into it from different view points.

Grace has become the great word which sums up the wealth of blessing coming to the world from God in His Son since Jesus died. Even the disciples saw the full richness of the word only when they looked back to the cross (Lk. 1 : 28, 2 : 52, 4 : 22, Jn. 1 : 14ff.; Rom. 1 : 17, 3 : 24, 5 : 21; Gal. 5 : 4; Phil. 1 : 7). The Grace of God manifest in all His dealing with men was revealed surprisingly in the Cross.

Also the Cross manifests the amazing love of God who seeks sinners. Therefore Cross is the great fact about God. The Cross declares that the final reality of the universe is love. If we are to understand the Cross we must begin with the certainty that it, like everything in the life of Jesus, is a revelation of God. Hence, also Cross becomes the expression of the sorrow of heaven in the fact of the sin of the world. However, it should be noted that Cross is not simply a witness to the divine sorrow and compassion, it is the all-sufficient sacrifice for the sin of the world. Thus it becomes an effective demonstration of Grace.

This is what the Cross of Calvary had done for the humanity as a whole. Therefore, in this context an

important question is raised. What role can the Church and the individual Christian believer play to make the message of the Cross relevant in the present life context of the people?

The great mission of the Church entrusted with it is to manifest the amazing love of God revealed through His Son Jesus Christ. It is with this sense of responsibility that the early missionaries set off their journey Eastward. They had to encounter an alien and unfriendly people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The blood of these missionary martyrs became the seed of the Church in these lands. In its true sense of the term they denied themselves and took up their cross so that the aborigines, tribals, dalits and the oppressed, the exploited and the marginalized might have life in abundance.

Now the Church is confronted with a new situation. The present context of the man is his powerlessness to set himself free from different kinds of bondage. His inability to stand against the evil powers he confronts in his daily life has allowed such forces to exercise their dominion over him. The phenomenon of self-centredness is so powerful that even it destroys human relationships. A clear analysis of any destructive event that took place in the past whether in religion or politics the root cause could be self-centredness of one person or a particular group. Inventions meant for good cause have already been used for evil purposes. The consequence of all these is the creation of a society which gives no importance to moral values. There are drug addicts who are irreparably damaged and finding no meaning whatsoever in life. Corruption is rampant in all circles. Oppression and exploitation of the powerless by the powerful is being continued unabatedly. Feeling of communalism has already proved to be disastrous to the peaceful co-existence of the people. This is the context of the people to which the meaning of the Cross of Jesus Christ has to be made applicable.

It is a very complex situation that the Church is encountering today. The situation is that one section of society represents the evil forces while there is a other section working hard to find a way out of their deplorable condition which is a creation of the former. This means that while some are facing the consequences of their own sin, others are unknowingly suffering from the consequences of the sins of other people. Both these situations are readily available in all contexts—international, national, regional and local. It is this complex situation that sets the stage for the Church to act—to play the role of a 'cross-bearer'.

We have an understanding that God has a preferential option for the poor, but as far as the 'Work of Jesus Christ' is concerned, it is certain that the purpose of the sending of the Son of God into the world was the redemption of the whole humanity from their respective conditions. So long as we believe that the death of Jesus on the cross was for all, and Grace is a free gift to all, our

responsibility as true disciples of that Jesus Christ is to show forth to all without any reservation the love of God manifested on the Cross. This involves self-sacrifice. An aspect of sacrifice is explicitly expressed in the words of Jesus. He said, '... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly' (Jn. 10 : 10). The translation of his words about the purpose of His taking human form into action is seen in his self-giving on the Cross. Also the same he wanted his disciples to follow. The aspect of self-giving and dying is clearly meant when Jesus said, '... unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (Jn. 12 : 24). Again he said, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' (Lk. 9 : 23). The mission of the Church as a suffering servant of the Lord involves the participation in his self-sacrifice. Luke's use of the term 'daily' means that a believer's participation in the redeeming work is continual as he enters into it by denying his self-centred life for the sake of the hopeless. This is also supported by the view that the story of passion and crucifixion did not begin just a week before Christ died, rather his whole life was passion and crucifixion, whole life which culminated in death was devoted to the task of reconciling sinners to God. He was giving himself for death day by day. The word of Calvary is the word of Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee and Jerusalem underlined and completed.

As has been discussed above, selfishness is the cause for the existence of evil. Unless we do away with our nature of selfishness the Grace of God cannot be inherited. Therefore, glorification and exaltation necessarily depends on how far the reality of the Cross is appropriated and expended in our day to day life as the followers of Jesus Christ. Also the Church has to work for the liberation of the oppressed in different ways from the clutches of evil forces. If the Church's act of liberating the former is done by the transformation of the whole attitude of self-centredness of the latter, both sections can enjoy the fruit of liberation.

Again, as the love of God forced God to give His life for the life of the world, we who profess to be christian should demonstrate that love in our life if we are to communicate God's life to the world. Selfishness is death-inflicting dominism. So the liberation of our own self-centredness into freedom of service brings more thoroughgoing demands to care for others. Therefore the christian responsibility lies in fostering of life by creating the congenial climate of hope and love. Love is the means of communicating life. In Jesus Christ we can acquire strength to love our neighbours purely and intensely in total self-forgetfulness. As the self-sacrifice and self-forgetfulness had been the source of Christ's exaltation to the Glory, the giving away of our selfish motives and carrying the Cross daily would bring glory and honour to both the Church and the world at large.

In Christ's Cross we are invited to realise the true meaning and weight of our sin in what our forgiveness cost. To say in our heart that we do not have the knowledge of our sin except in the light of Christ's Cross. It makes us certain that in order that we are forgiven of sin and its consequences a price had already been paid on our behalf. Cross makes us confident that we have nothing more to pay.

Again only in the light of the Cross of Christ one can understand the meaning of Grace. It is free and unmerited love of God for humanity. As far as the recipient is concerned the Grace is free in the sense that it flows

'...Go and Tell My Brethren...'

EASTER MESSAGE

MOST REV. DR. VASANT P. DANDIN *The Moderator*



The New Testament is very emphatic and authentic in declaring the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Every book in the N.w Testament speaks about the resurrection, keeping up the consistency. His disciples, after being empowered by the Holy Spirit, came out from their hiding place and began to preach in the streets of Jerusalem. What was their theme? It is the resurrection of Jesus.

'You killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses'.

(Acts 3: 15).

The Disciples had no doubt and fear in saying it out, this unbelievable event in the history which is a mystery beyond human comprehension. The death and the resurrection of Christ is the Divine plan for the salvation of human beings. It is not an accidental happening but the fulfilment of the scriptural prophecy. (see 1 Cor. 15:4). The resurrection shed a new light on the scriptures. One could now read with a fresh understanding of God's

purpose in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world.

For the proof of Christ's resurrection we have the testimony of the angel, of Christ himself as we read in the gospel portion (Matt. 28:1-10) and the Church. Yes, the Church itself is an evidence—the existence of the Church despite a number of persecutions aimed to annihilate the Church and the growth of the Church inspite of taking the Gospel to the poor, weak and the oppressed—is a strong proof for the resurrection. He is alive and is with us.

The resurrected Christ who first appeared to the women on the Easter morning asked them to 'go and tell'. These two words, go and tell, are the most important words for the mission of the Church. It is the commission which Jesus had given to all of us. We have to go out and tell the world that Jesus Christ came into this world to set the people free from the satanic forces—the forces that divide people, the forces that set nations against nations; communities against communities; families against families; person against person—causing the communal hatred and upsetting the peaceful co-existence. 'Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28) is his invitation to this world. Jesus came into this world to set it free and save the sinners. He opted to lay down his life in order to save the sinful world. He was crucified for our sake; died, in order that we might live. But death was no end for him as God raised him from the dead and made him victorious over the death. We have to go out and tell the world about this victorious Christ. This is the message we have to share with our brothers and sisters, 'The Lord has risen indeed'. (Luke 24, 34).

May the risen Lord grant us the power of his resurrection and transform us to be his messengers and instil in us a new spirit to go out into the world and boldly proclaim the good news—the Lord has risen indeed!

I wish you all a happy Easter.

witnesses—a testimony of the agony of death i.e., the soul being separated from the presence of God the Father. For Adam separation from the Father's presence in Eden did not mean anything. This is what was happening with the vast majority of mankind. God in his infinite love for humanity wanted that every human being must be conscious of the agony of death. God was struggling to create this consciousness in man from the beginning of the World. It was for this reason the rich man in hell who loved his five brothers on earth so dearly requested father Abraham in heaven to send someone from the dead to testify the agony of death to his brothers so that they might repent and save their souls from entering into the hades. Abraham told him that his brothers who did not listen to Moses and the prophets would not listen to one from the dead (Lk. 16:19-31). The Father in heaven on the other hand must have so willed to make Jesus, who is greater than Moses and the Prophets, to testify from the cross to mankind the agony of being separated from the presence of God so that those who hear it from that time onwards till the end of the World would believe it without doubt or dispute and repent and inherit eternal life.

So the fact remains that Jesus was forsaken by God. If the Father had answered the cry of Jesus he would have told, 'my son I have forsaken you only for a stipulated time and not for ever. I have not permitted death to have permanent hold on you. I have forsaken you to save man from perishing because if once man is forsaken it will be for eternity and he cannot be delivered from the hold of death. You have shed your blood to save man, and

had I allowed you to die without revealing to mankind that the soul of a sinner who dies without repenting will be separated from the Father once and for all to be eternally under the hold of death, your mission cannot be said to have been fulfilled. It was for the total fulfilment of your mission I have chosen to permit your soul enter the hades and make you cry aloud questioning me so that it may be a testimony about the agony of death to mankind for all the generations to come so that they may guard their souls from perishing'. Jesus would have been relieved of the spiritual tension caused by the separation of his soul from the Father and would have answered the Father, 'let your will be done'.

It is this testimony cry of Jesus about the agony of death which God the Father wants everyone of us to believe in and repent so that none of us might perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). If God who so loved the World is to appear before mankind today he would say, 'I have given my only begotten son because I loved you so much; will you believe his testimony and repent so that you may not perish but have everlasting life'. King Solomon had rightly put it,

'He who covers his sins will not prosper but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy'
Pro. 28:13.

Forsaking the soul of Jesus from the time of his loud cry till the resurrection of his body on the third day was God's scheme of love to save mankind and it did not end with that. It is a continuing scheme to the end of the age. Reciprocation of God's love by mankind remains.

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For the Development of Leadership in the Churches

Introduction :

Though cumborsom I should shoulder this task of presenting a paper in this conference, with an obscure pride that I am an alumnus of this college since 1979. I am grateful to the conveners for giving me this unique opportunity.

Search for a new kind of Ministry which is free from pseudo prestige, unchecked self-impudence, irrelevant borrowed language, narrow domestic walls of social distances and above all a peril of fiscal indiscipline, has been the struggle of ministers in this generation. Hence a display of a wide range of new patterns in the pastoral ministry is timely help, for all those who are seriously involved and committed to the cause of the Kingdom.

The need of the hour is to find an ideal centre for theological education to train the personalities well fit for the fight against the de-christianising forces within the church along with the principalities that deface the kingdom values in society.

Hence the theme of this conference is a clear ray of hope towards and entirely a new strategy of christian religious enterprise in A.P. I am sure all the papers that are presented in this conference really contribute to this purpose.

In this paper I have tried to display a few patterns of ministry after explaining the changing conditions that drive the need for these new patterns. And towards the end I tried to show the open doors for an entirely new breed of leadership that emerges through these patterns. The perspectives expressed in this paper are more out of my pastoral experience than academics.

I. CHANGING SCENARIO :

It was an abuse that the Apostles received very positively in its right sense when the envious Jews in Thessalonice uproared 'These that have turned the world Upside down are come hither too' (Acts 17:16). Donald B. Kraybill puts the whole gospel story in a similar frame called 'The upside down Kingdom' in his book that won an award. How powerful and effective must be the kind of ministerial from that those Apostles used to turn the whole world of value system upside down. Thus started the Christian ministry some 2,000 years ago.

(1) Static Traditional forms—a 'Religious abuse' :

Ministerial values are eternal from the begining till the end of human history on this planet. But the forms and patterns are bound to be dynamic along with the

changing conditions of the society. And it is our glaring observation that the pace of change in all spheres of life including ministerial patterns of the religion, is gradually accelerated day by day due to the fast encircling heavy clouds of industry and modernization. It is now an abuse if someone tries to monopolise a particular ministry in the church to a particular religious strata like the 4th Century Bishops who kept for themselves the prerogative of preaching for they thought that that was the only way to keep the faith inspurious. However, 'the worshipping congregation is a constitutive element and it needs a ministry of word and sacrament, but whether the over-all administration and the over-all pattern of ministry should be parochial or something else is a matter of sanctified expediency.'¹

(2) Socio cultural drift—a driving force :

The star culture, communication, superfast transportation, overnight changing political scene, competitive educational systems, ever widening commerce of need exploitation and so on and so forth are the powerful forces that are driving a massive socio-cultural drift in India. Andhra Pradesh is not an exception of this effect.

The spread of all traditional forms and patterns of production is insufficient to meet the needs of the day. Hence the emergence of modern technology in industry, agriculture, education, commerce, and all other spheres of life including religion. This is the age of speed. May be for Jesus Christ too to visit us again with a changed culture. (1 Thess. 4:16).

(3) Influx of New Demands—Formative factors :

In this ever changing socio-cultural situation there emerge new demands which provide a paradigm for the formulation of new forms. This is trae in the religious life of the people in A.P. The christian population in A.P. in recent times has suffered much from various discriminations and exploitations along with the general epidemics.

The church is long due to respond to the constant jolt given by the action groups and extremists who say 'the tortures of the peasant labourers in the rural farm lands, the feudal crimes on the assertive landless peasants, the rapes on the helpless and powerless, the murders of the innocent, the denial of civil rights, the trampling down of fundamental human rights, all these question the very chirstianness of the silent and indifferent church'²

Ecological imbalances environment pollution, national and international militierisation, nuclear as well as conventional arms race, unipolar monopoly of the UNO and

on the other hand the developing new trends in the multi religious nature of Indian society, and so on are the situations that demand the change in our patterns. And in response, the formative factors like ecumenism, dialogue 'Christo-Centric—Syncretism or God-Centered—Syncretism'. * Indigenisation, Christian Action groups, developmental voluntary organisations, peace negotiation at NCC and WCC levels and so on have come up. And now we are left to choose from a widespread options of new ministerial forms, that are relevant to the needs and hurts of the deprived masses.

II. NEW FORMS OF PASTORAL MINISTRY :

Ministerial form can be defined as a model or frame work in which the component pastoral functions are systematically arranged in an order that satisfies the convictions of the follower.

Form of ministry is an ever debated issue which contributed to the birth of various politics of the church, functions and even new denominations. Jesus seemed to have spent 40 days on this debate for a right form of ministry and he had decided upon the form of cross rather than yielding to the shortcut forms of the worldly master (Luke 4 : 7). In pastoral ministry the forms must always have been cosmocentric as well as Christo-Centric. A perfect balance and relevancy to the culture of the day should be maintained. Man is heading towards a super state of life not only biologically but sociologically too, which Tailhard De Chardin calls 'Ultra Humanity'. * Life's concentration of existence is tending fast to ultra levels when we critically speculate the future of man. As the socio-cultural setting is dynamic so the ministerial forms are. Hence there is need for a constant check on the forms in order to update their utility and viability. Yet the new forms are not mere matter of convenience or utility towards an enterprising caricature of the denomination but a Christian expediency arising out of faith and commitment for service to humanity.

In this way a number of faithful Christians visualised the pastoral ministry in a special way and formed various new forms.

(1) Major Forms of Pastoral Ministry :

Some of the new forms which are popular and already propagated and put into experiment are discussed here.

(i) Fourfold Ministry : (5)

Various church leaders and theologians have met on a consultation 'Renewal of Ministry in A.P.' and formulated this new form of ministry which is experimented in various parts of A.P. and have yielded salutary results. The four component ministries in this form are briefly discussed here.

(a) *Preaching Teaching Ministry* : A person with fullest training possible in all theological and sociological subjects will be in charge of a region of 30 to 40 congregations on full-time basis may be paid by the church. He or she will have three types of functions.

- Visitation for preaching and teaching in the area of incharge.
- Conducting training programmes seminars, retreats for congregational workers.
- Study and planning for the renewal of Church.

(b) *Sacramental Ministry and pastoral Ministry* : A person with a short term training to conduct usual worships and sacraments in a congregation. He serves the Church voluntarily in this capacity.

(c) *Ministry of Development with special reference to socio-economic concerns* : A person with full training in developmental studies and work will be incharge of this ministry. He will train and organise the developmental workers each of whom is incharge for three or four parishes. This main task will be to relate the social and economic development with the spiritual growth of the people towards the wholistic growth of the community.

(d) *Ministry of the Laity* : 'This shall involve men and women who are trained to be the lay Apostolate of the church serving both within and outside the church in a ministry of caring for both the spiritual and physical needs of the people, educating them, building them up and challenging to harness their own potentialities for action in the world'.

(ii) Diaconal Ministry :

In 1982 the church of South India had a consultation on 'priorities for the mission of the church' in which Rev. Dr. Victor Premasagar had emphasised the 'Diaconal training with pastoral exphasis'. Again in 1984 the leaders of the CSI met on another consultation of 'Diaconal Ministry' and discussed far and wide the Diaconal Ministerial form. This is not ministerial form by itself but a full vision of the diaconate format based on the principles of the first diaconate (Acts 6).

'Vision for equipping Local congregation in Mission' is another programme of the CSI coined and proposed by the then Moderator, Victor Premasagar. This programme is a new Ministerial form at a congregational level which provides to the congregation a full participation in the mission of the church. Each congregation could be a full replica of the whole church and the kingdom of God.

(iii) Ashram Approach to Pastoral Ministry :

'ASHRAM' is a typical Indian symbol for spiritual discipline. The primary purpose of an Ashram is God seeking and God experience. This is done under the guidance of a more experienced person—the Guru. In a Christian Ashram, Christ takes the place of the Guru. The Ashram life-style is necessarily simple, partly to enable people from various strata of society to feel at home.

Giving some practical suggestions for successful evangelism in India PD Devanandan cuts across to state that 'the future rests with the Ashram approach. At any rate in the immediate years to come the Christian evangelist to Hindu India should more and more adopt the underlying principles of Ashram strategy in planning his campaign'. * Ashram approach takes care of the problem of paying for the job of evangelism or too much of professionalism of the Church.

A. K. Tharian ¹⁰ explains five salient features of Christian Ashrams which are yet another new form of pastoral ministry for the church in A.P. if we want to venture this endeavour.

- (1) Simplicity of Life-style.
- (2) Christian living and witness.
- (3) Struggle for peace and justice.
- (4) Spirituality beyond pietism.
- (5) Shalom.

'In the Ashram we transcend customs, petty creeds, communities and communism' said late justice Chendhaiah.

Mathew Zachariah¹¹ gives a form called Christian Educational Ashram—Which tries to bring together the ancient Ashram ideal of India and the radical thinking of the renowned Latin American Educationalist, Paulo Freire (Generative themes, Dialectic ideology, Educational Praxis, conscientisation and so on) Ashram is a detachment not physically from society but from its malices, in order to become a leaven in society for its edification. We only have to implement and see how prophetic and shepherding the Ashram approaches are in dealing with socio-political problems in our state.

(iv) Satsangh—An interreligious ministerial form :

The propounder of this form was late Stanley Jones of Sat Tal Ashram. His disciple Acharya Daya Prakash Titus is actively following his ministry in satsangh form in most of the towns in U.P. In his book 'Why Satsangh' D. P. Titus explains the features of satsangh ministry. A few of them are

- (1) Pastor is Guru of the Congregation with all virtues to be followed. He is a friend, philosopher and guide.
- (2) It is a group of elite members from any religious background exploring strategies of ministerial functions among the people irrespective of caste and creed.
- (3) Satsangh is basically a christian fellowship with Christ as the source of inspiration and with the local church as open place of contemplation.
- (4) Dialectic ideology (Reflection is authentic through language) and Orthodoxy in Christian Principles are followed.
- (5) Dialogue should never push the bars of the Principle.

'Unity in diversity'. The prayer that was made in the 23rd Synod meeting of the CSI in Palayamkottai which of course has become a big scam for the sectorians is not a problem in this approach. This approach goes well with the statement suggested by 'Hindu Christian Dialogue, February 1992, Varanasi' that for a creative Dialogue 'each religious community should reformulate its faith in the context of religious pluralism. Relevant Scriptural hermeneutics, reconception of 'Uniqueness' claims and reinterpretation of mission and conversion are necessary'.¹²

- (6) Satsangh is self-sufficient Christian Institution.

TTS has programme called 'Religious Friends Circles' basically a dialogue group in satsangh form, which meets periodically. 'Relational distinctiveness' of Abhishiktanandam is always compromised in satsangh approach. In a strategic way this form provides in rural

set up a healthy atmosphere to deal with issues like communal harmony, rural reconstruction, religious integration and so on.

(v) Caste Churches :

It is a bitter pill to swallow if someone blames us that we have casteism in the church today. Yet there are caste churches in A.P. which are comfortable to a considerable extent, to be called so.

In reality these caste churches are living with reduced casteism, Christian nurture may reduce this problem among these Church goes to minimum. Through this approach I think the dalit stigma (Whether privilege or peril) to Christians may be mitigated. Churches of 'Subba Rao Movement' in A.P. have this form of postoral ministry. Also this feature is prevalent in some parts of the Catholic Church in A.P.

(vi) Open Door Ministry—Pilgrim contingent :

There is a growing tendency of the churches becoming pilgrim centers and pastor an ever present poojari in it. This phenomenon is seen in the Andhra, Karnataka border belt areas. If we let it go, in no time the centers like Medak, Dornakal, Kalasapadu and the like will fall under this ministerial form.

The main features of this tendency is that the congregation will only be a floating christian pilgrims who visit the centre on a self-stipulated time and purpose. They come to stay a full day or little more in the church premises, the pastor provides his/her care as and when they request in the form of teaching, preaching, sacraments counselling prayer for the sick and so on.

The Catholic centre like Velangini, St. Thomas Mount Madras, Infant Jesus shrine, Bangalore and so on are already well known for christian pilgrimages of this sort.

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(to be continued)

Sri Lanka: Bishop Protests Army Attack on Civilians

Bishop D. J. Ambalavanar, head of the diocese of Jaffna in the Sri Lankan Church of South India, sent a letter (12 January) to Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa protesting the 6 January air force bombing of Sithankerny which resulted in the killing of nine people and wounding of 16 others.

The diocese of Jaffna is situated on the Jaffna peninsula, the main area of civil war between the Sri Lankan government forces and the liberation movement led by the largest of the militant groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The LTTE and the other groups are fighting for the establishment of an autonomous homeland for the minority Tamils. According to Britannica World Data, 74 per cent of Sri Lanka's population of 17 million is Sinhalese. Tamils make up about 18 per cent of the population.

The bishop told the Sri Lankan leader that the attack was uncalled for because '... to the best of our knowledge, there were no targets of any military importance' in the area, and urged the government to 'restrain the air force from such meaningless killings'.

Bishop Ambalavanar also condemned the government-imposed travel restrictions on the inhabitants of the peninsula. 'As citizens of this country, it is but natural that our people must travel to other parts of the country and particularly to (the capital city of) Colombo to transact their normal business.'

He added that the only route available for travellers out of the peninsula is by boat across the lagoon at Kilali, an area prohibited by the government. 'The people however have no alternative but to ignore this prohibition when urgent business compels them to travel', the bishop's letter said.

He said that about 30 civilians had been killed in recent weeks while trying to cross the lagoon. 'These are

civilians who are travelling from one part of the country to another because of compelling circumstances, and for the navy to open fire at these helpless passengers is both inhuman and contrary to all international norms', the bishop said.

Meanwhile, thousands of people held a demonstration against government military operations in Jaffna (11 January) and handed a petition to government officials through the representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, foreign embassies and other international organizations represented in Colombo, said a statement from the Jaffna diocese of the Church of South India.

The demonstration was organized to protest the suffering inflicted on the people by the fighting during the last 32 months. 'It is obvious the people are no longer able to bear the intense hardships, the economic strangulation, deprivation of electricity and fuel, limitation on medicines and food and the prohibition on travel', the statement said.

It added that as a result of the continuing fighting there are now 400,000 displaced people and 200,000 others who have been deprived of their sources of livelihood. 'Pregnant mothers are deprived of essential nutritional foods and medicines resulting in babies being born underweight. Thousands die due to inadequate medical attention. School children are deprived of adequate stationary and educational aids. Even equipment sent to the Jaffna University by donor agencies from abroad cannot be brought into Jaffna,' the statement said.

Among other demands, the demonstrators called for the immediate lifting of the economic embargo imposed on the Jaffna region, freedom of movement for the people of the region and a halt to all military activity in the area.

(EPS)

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Spiritual Renewal: Life and Mission of the Church

Rt. Rev. Dr. S.B. JOSHUA, C.N.I.

'Renewal', 'regeneration', 'new-birth', 'new creation' are metaphors used in the Bible in connexion with people's relationship with God. In the New Testament they are specifically used in connexion with Christian life. Renewal can be for the individual an *event*; with the subsequent life that follows the thrust of that event. Thus Saul's life was completely and dramatically changed after he encountered the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. The life that followed the event, the life of Saul became Paul the Apostle, was one of adventure, persecution, spiritual gains—'Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord' (Phil. 3:8). His life was one of ultimate faithfulness to his Master, even unto the point of death. We can say the same thing of Sadhu Sunder Singh. He remained faithful to the *Vision* that he had of the Master, and forsaking everything he wandered on the face of the earth proclaiming the love of God in Christ Jesus.

For many, renewal is not an event that can be identified in their lives, but it is experience of a different type. It is a transformation of the mind by the penetrating influence of the Spirit. The influence of the Spirit is like a gentle breeze, new every morning. 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness' (Lam. 3:22). Mother Theresa is a wonderful witness to the 'gentle breeze' that displays a mighty power in action. I would like to think of Stephen, the Christian martyr, as a man of quiet disposition, yet possessed of a power from on high which confounded his accusers: 'All who sit in the Council saw that his face was like the face of an angel' (Acts 6:15). As a lamb he laid down his life praying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit... Lord, do not hold this sin against them'. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

For the Apostles, renewal or re-birth came with Pentecost. It was like the rush of a mighty wind. They were completely swept off their feet and their behaviour was most unusual, so much so, some mocked and said, 'they were filled with new wine'!

Neither the Apostles nor any one after them have prescribed a formula for us by which we can acquire newness or that we can compel the Spirit to renew us to activate us. You know of the incidence that took place in Samaria. When the Apostles had laid their hands on the believers, they received the Holy Spirit. Now when Simon the magician saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands, may receive the Holy Spirit'. Peter rebuked him, saying, 'Your silver perish with you,

because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money' (Acts 8:14-20). An interesting observation to be made about Simon the magician is that long before this stupid incidence took place, he had become a *believer*. We read earlier in that chapter in Acts of the Apostles, 'Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptised, he continued with Philip'. The point to be noted here is that there were *believers* in Samaria and there was Simon himself a *believer* and yet they had not experienced renewal, they had not been endowed with power from on High. It is food for thought for every one of the us *believers* here this morning.

From our study of the Bible and from our own experiences, it is clear that the Holy Spirit who renews us cannot be engineered, cannot be purchased, cannot be manipulated. Further, a person can be a believer and yet not be renewed, not filled with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is the gift of God, the new life is spiritual, and can be originated only by God. Renewal or change can be effected only by God, and is sheer miracle. We can only receive it gratefully.

This puts us into an awkward situation as far as the 'programmatic presentation' of the theme is concerned. We cannot develop a programme or a time table for effecting spiritual renewal. Yet, I can fully understand and deeply appreciate the concern expressed by the organisers of the Synod to bring about a Spiritual renewal in the Church of North India. Is there nothing that we can do? The concern at this particular moment of our Church's life is very deep, very painful, very demoralizing. There seems to be an inward vacuum, coupled with the onslaughts of satan from without. Many bulls encompass us, strong bulls of Delhi surround us, strong bulls of Bombay trample us, strong bulls of Darjeeling attack us, strong bulls of the 'soil' scatter us. There are indeed bulls of many breeds that we can add on. In despair we cry, 'Restore us to thyself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old!.. Or hast thou utterly rejected us?... Art thou exceedingly angry with us?' (Lam. 5:21)

Earlier I asked, is there nothing we can do? Yes, there is something that we can do. Let us turn our cry of despair into a cry of penitence and hope. It may be, as prophet Amos might say, it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of the Anglicans, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Baptists the Brethren and the Disciples of Christ, all in the united family of the Church of North India. There has to be a cry, a cry from the bottom of our hearts, both individually and collectively as a Church. Josiah was able to bring about a reform in his kingdom because,

he, as the head, was the first to rend his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes. Nothing short of personal and collective awareness of sin and the desire to be clothed with the righteousness of God can bring about spiritual renewal. 'Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord: In all the squares there shall be wailing; and in all the streets they shall say, Alas! alas! They shall call the farmers to mourning and to wailing those who are skilled in lamenation, and in all vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through the midst of you, says the Lord' (Amos 5 : 16).

This is picturesque language, and we reserve it for use in the pulpits, particularly during lent and Holy Week. To very few of us it strikes as a personal call for introspection and repentance. And yet repentance and waiting upon God makes the heart and mind ready and receptive for spiritual renewal. It is true that we cannot engineer a renewal; it is true that we cannot compel the Spirit to move us. But it is also true that the Father gives good things to those who ask him. 'Ask and ye shall receive', is our Lord's promise to us. Our Lord Said to his disciples, 'If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him' (Luke 11 : 13). It is important to know and be convinced that Spiritual renewal has to do with the Holy Spirit. We must unashamedly and unreservedly accept this and anticipate a fulfillment in our times and in our lives. This is biblical doctrine; this is biblical fundamentalism. By renewal the mind is transformed and we are able to discern the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The New Testament indicates the absolute contrast between two kinds of life, and the momentousness of the passing from one to the other is referred to as 'new creation', 'new birth', 'resurrection'. Paul says to the Corinthians, 'Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come' (2 Cor. 5 : 17). Again writing to Collosians, he says, '...you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead' (Col. 2 : 12). The most powerful and categorical statement comes from our Lord himself: 'Truly truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3 : 3, 5).

I don't know the 'how' and 'why' of it, but it seems that the fulness of the Spirit was given to man only after the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, his death, resurrection and ascension. Centuries before Jesus came, Jeremiah had prophesied, 'Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (31 : 31-34). So also did Ezekiel envisage a conversion of the people of Israel: 'I will give them one heart, and put a new Spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God' (11 : 19-20).

With Jesus of Nazareth came the *new age*, and the new age has come within the reach of men—the age of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit in Jesus is evidence of the reality that the new age has come. Our Lord hinted at this when he read the famous mission passage from Isaiah

and concluded with the words, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing' (Luke 4 : 21). According to Luke, Jesus opened the book and *found the place* where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. And he closed the book, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the Synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing'.

This is the sum and substance of the life and mission of Jesus; it is the sum and substance of our life and mission.

For Jesus, the moment of renewal was his baptism, 'The Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, 'Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased'. Endued with power from on High, Jesus embarked upon his mission of proclamation of the good news, fulfilling his Father's will. I believe and I am not alone in this belief that the process of renewal begins in the challenge of crisis. Josephine Bax in her book, 'The Good Wine; Spiritual Renewal in the Church of England', writes, 'The challenge of crisis begins the process. Whether spiritual renewal is personal or corporate, the ongoing experiences of every day christian life or the landmark experience of the contemporary renewal movements, it goes through three identifiable stages. First of all comes *crisis*, a challenge (either external or internal) that brings us up short, which does not allow us to continue along our present path without response and adjustment. Secondly, a *search* for the right response and for the resources to carry it out, an attempt to break through on a spiritual level. Thirdly, the *breakthrough itself*, bringing insights, fresh resources, new purposes and direction'.

There is a clear recognition that there must be a change of direction, propelled by a confidence in God's renewing and enabling grace and power. The renewal of personal faith, life and witness is followed by a renewal of relationships, of community of mission. The encounter with God's love evokes a response of love towards him, our fellow human beings and indeed towards the whole creation. As love flows out, spiritual vitality is maintained; relationships are healed; relational groups are sustained; the Body of Christ is discovered and active concern for the poor and disabled is maintained. (Sehon Goodridge, 'Renewal of the Church in Mission')

On several occasions we have spoken and have expressed our concern for the Church's mission in India. But I don't think that any one has anything exciting to report on this from any corner of the CNI. Yes, there have been some baptisms, 'few churches have grown, there has been social work and there has been some health ministry. But none of this *work* presents a mission thrust of the *people*. The congregations are not involved. There is no sacrificial sharing of one's own resources. Even our dispensing of foreign 'charity' is done in the comfort of air-conditioned rooms, air-travels and meetings in five-star hotels. With this life-style, mission is simply not possible. Gustavo Guterrez, a Latin American theologian says, 'If I lived complacently with three meals a day, a siesta, and a secure life, untouched by what is going on around me, then climb into the pulpit on Sunday and tell the people 'God loves you', what I say will sound hollow, like a clanging cymbal. The challenge of the gospel is its power to transform me and my attitudes

and my whole way of life, so that my words will be truly meaningful to those to whom I proclaim it. It is good news only if it really makes sense to them in their concrete lives'.

For effective *mission*, we must return to some semblance of the Apostolic Church :

'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good-will of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved' (Acts 2 : 44-47).

Given the choice, how many of us would opt for such a community life? Not many. How many of us are even mentally reconciled with such a life-style so that some spiritual constraints dictate our life-style and our concern for the poor? Only a very few. We speak of mission; volumes and volumes are written on mission of the Church; millions of dollars are spent on mission conferences and mission travel. Just like there are business 'Executives', there are mission 'Executives' whose business it is to promote mission as if mission is one more consumer good in the market. The heart searching question is, who amongst us wants to be poor? Worse still, who amongst us want to become poor by voluntarily sharing what we have with those who have not?

A variety of small group or congregational experiences are emerging that are enabling people to embrace the story of redemption in their own lives and share it with others through word and deed. A recent survey done by Oxford Diocese in England noted certain characteristics which were found common in churches that were growing and reaching out to people :

- (1) Care for the needy within the congregation.
- (2) Small groups for the open sharing of faith by members of the congregations.
- (3) The ability to manage change within the church.
- (4) A collaborative style of leadership.
- (5) Evidence of prayer life.
- (6) Good giving of money.
- (7) Lively, varied and sincere worship.
- (8) A concern for, and action within, the locality.
- (9) The setting of clear and realisable objectives and regular reviews of parish strategy.
- (10) The sense that the laity is to be the church in the world and not just clerical helpers within the congregation (i.e. an outward-looking rather than an inward-looking attitude).

These are churches, we are told, where mission and evangelism is not just talked about, but happening. Since a 'programmatic presentation' was expected of me, which I am unable to do, may be the ten points mentioned could be taken up for consideration and commitment at the level of our congregations and pastorates. It is the congregations who matter, and they must reflect the mission-oriented understanding of the Church that we see described in the Book of Acts. For this to happen we wait upon the Lord for a spiritual renewal.

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RT. REV. B. G. PRASADA RAO,
(Bishop Retd.)
Co-ordinator and Director,
Haqq Institute on Evangelism.

Homiletics on the Indian Sub-Continent

REV. DR. P. SURYA PRAKASH, Bangalore

Christian preaching continues to occupy the foremost position in the ministry of the Church in the Indian Sub-continent. The Church continues to preach and the people continue to show their interest to hear good preaching. The Church finds itself in a pluralistic context surrounded by many religions. Although preaching is done on Sundays as in every country, because of its multi-religious background, there is a marked difference in India. The phenomenon of Christian preaching by Preachers who are independent of the institutional or established churches is one of the chief features of Protestantism in India. Along with the missionaries, pastors, catechists, evangelists and Christian teachers individual Christians, especially converts, have also carried on evangelistic preaching as independent preachers in the sub-continent.

1. Independent Preachers

The practice of independent preaching both in and outside of the church came into existence mainly for two reasons. First, as the churches began to grow in size, more preachers and teachers were needed, but not enough theologically-trained persons were available. Lay preachers and teachers independently began to share the responsibility of teaching and preaching. Second, independent preaching began with a deep conviction to live and preach the Gospel in an Indian way. Independent preaching and teaching religious faith and practices belongs to the Indian religious tradition. There have always been wandering sadhus and friars among the Hindus and other religions. Therefore converts from Hinduism or Islam to Christianity carried over this tradition to the Church.

Some of the best known converts who became independent preachers are Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati (1859-1922) and Chandraseel (b. 1860) both women converts from Hinduism; Paul Kadambhavanam (b. 1887) and Sadhu Sundar Singh (1888-1929). They all preached the Gospel of Christ independently of the established churches among Christians and non-Christians, following the Indian tradition of religious teaching by wandering sadhus. The importance of this phenomenon of independent preaching to the Indian church had been rightly pointed out as follows: 'one of the signs evidencing the desire of the indigenous Church to be free, is the presence of the independent religious worker or preacher. There are now scores of indigenous Christian preachers who belong to no denomination, but are like the wandering friars or *sanyasis*, untrammelled either by dogmas or forms of worship, and free to interpret Christ in their own way'. ('Indian Christians', Madras, G. A. Natesan and Company, 1928, p. 338). At the beginning of this century 'a new move towards nationalisation in administration and management and a new awareness of the indigenous form of worship and witness' (P. Solomon Raj, *A Christian Folk-Religion in India*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 1986, p. 1.) began to take place in the Indian churches. Many of the practices and values inherited from the Western Missions came under scrutiny. Efforts were made to free the churches from 'the Latin Captivity'. (An expression used by R. H. S. Boyd for his book: *India and the Latin Captivity of the Church*, Cambridge University Press, 1974).

Solomon Raj points out: 'Slowly the Indian Christians have got rid of their hesitation to express their faith in truly indigenous forms.' (Solomon Raj, op.cit, p. 2). As part of the movement to free Christianity in India from its 'Latin Captivity', Christian preachers appeared on the scene zealous to adopt Indian forms to express Christian faith and practice. Christian preaching by independent persons has become, since then, one of such indigenous forms among the Protestant churches.

Independent preaching takes place at three levels. First a number of Christian preachers go from place to place, mainly visiting Christian families and conducting prayer meetings in small groups. They have no fixed plan or itinerary. Therefore they are usually called wandering preachers. They make a vital contribution to the ministry of Christian religious education by their preaching and teaching. Their contribution is recognized by Bishop Azariah: 'Preaching seems to be the chief form of *Christian Teaching* in rural congregations. This is done periodically and sporadically by Pastors, both trained and untrained, by Elementary School Teachers—mostly working as voluntary Teachers, Catechists, and also by itinerant preachers both official and also frequently unofficial wandering evangelists.' (*Witnessing in India Today*, Madras, 1983, p. 40). Yet sometimes these preachers are considered a nuisance to the churches because of their emphasis on personal and group prayers as against the liturgical worship in the church. Second, revival preachers are often invited by congregations to hold revival meetings at least once a year. Independent preaching here takes place at the level of a particular congregation. Third, sometimes a number of churches in big cities and towns organise revival meetings jointly at an ecumenical level. Such meetings are called Christian Conventions, Good News Festivals, New Life Festivals, Gospel Festivals, or simply Revival Meetings.

The independent preachers are of two types :

- (a) There are those who are full-time voluntary independent preachers or evangelists without any other professional commitment.
- (b) There are other preachers who are professionally associated with independent Christian organisations.

All the above-mentioned types of preachers are normally called revival preachers. This independent preaching has contributed to the indigenous form of the theological thought and expression of the Gospel in India. Bishop John A. Subhan of the Methodist Church in India who was himself once an independent preacher and a Muslim convert called the independent preachers 'consecrated individual Christians'. (Estborn, *Gripped by Christ*, World Christian Books No. 53, London, Lutterworth Press 1965, p. 7). Such preaching persuades the congregations into a different kind of religious experience, a kind which is not commonly emphasized by the mainline churches. Many people especially Christians are drawn to such independent preachers.

Christians flock to their meetings to hear them preach. Independent preachers confine themselves strictly to biblical preaching and many Christians believe that they speak with the power of the Holy Spirit. The availability

of the preacher who is neither burdened with church administration nor bound to a constitution is appreciated by many. The theological emphases of the independent preachers are, (a) personal conversion to Christ; (b) personal experience of salvation; (c) acceptance of Jesus Christ as Saviour; (d) bearing witness to Jesus Christ through word and deed in life and work and (e) leading a life of prayer and preparing oneself for the coming of Christ.

The Church as an institution or a community of believers and its theology and sacraments are given only secondary importance by these preachers. The social, political, economic and even cultural situation of the people is almost totally neglected by the independent preachers. Their emphasis is on faith and practice at the individual level. Therefore their understanding and interpretation of the Christian faith can be called Personal Christianity. One of the weaknesses of the revival preachers is that they go only to the members of the established Churches, whereas the independent wandering preachers, especially converts go to non-Christians also.

In recent years Christian preaching by independent preachers has increased, becoming a regular feature in the Protestant churches irrespective of denomination. Thus preaching is never confined only to the institutional or the historical churches in India. It has always been carried on both by the full-time workers of the various churches, such as pastors and evangelists, and by voluntary Christians. Preaching and teaching of the Gospel by the voluntary and independent Christian preachers comprising lay and ordained men and women is typical of the Protestant churches in India.

The evangelical preaching characteristic of independent preachers is carried on also in the theological colleges with an evangelical bent. However, the kind of preaching that goes on in liberal theological colleges and churches is different. It is mostly oriented to social issues and matters of justice and equality. By and large preaching is given lesser importance than theology in the liberal theological colleges.

2. The Lectionary Preachers

Churches such as the Church of South India, the Church of North India, the Lutheran Churches have lectionaries for the Christian Year. Normally a theme for the day is also suggested along with the Old Testament, Epistle and the Gospel readings. Preachers try to find in the texts supporting ideas. The result is that they usually preach thematic sermons, using the texts to illustrate them. Exegesis is usually neglected, given only a secondary place in the preparation of sermons. Roland Gierth who made an intensive study of Christian life and work in South India, makes the following observation regarding preaching in the churches: '... it should be remembered that text-centred, expository preaching occurred quite seldom, whilst the sermon often came to life because of the preacher's personal emotional engagement, which is rooted in a very vivid faith and the acquaintance with almost all listeners in the church'. (Roland Gierth, *Christian Life and Work at the Pastorate Level and Practical Theology in South India*, Madras, Christian Literature Society, 1977, p. 337).

3. The Reference Concordance Preachers

There are many preachers who in a single sermon trace one subject, one theme or one word through the entire Bible. This may be called reference/concordance preaching. Such preaching is mostly found among the sectarian groups.

4. Sermon in Indian Christian Worship

The sermon occupies a unique place in Christian liturgy and worship in India. Many of the Indian religious traditions do not have the practice of a religious discourse during worship. In many denominations, preaching is not seen as simply one of the many elements of worship but as the important element (although in some traditions the celebration of Holy Communion is of equal importance). The preaching of the Western missionaries and the Indian tradition of religious *gurus* (teachers) making discourses to their disciples form the antecedents of contemporary Indian preaching. Both in form and content Western preaching continue to influence preaching among the Indian churches in urban areas. However, indigenous forms are used in preaching in the villages.

5. The Indian Methods of Preaching

There are a variety of methods adopted in the preaching of the Gospel among rural congregations in the subcontinent. Notable among them are: *Drama*—Indians have a deep love for drama. Numerous itinerant groups go from place to place enacting the stories from both Christian and other scriptures. These groups portray religious and spiritual truth through homely dialogues, spontaneous actions and appealing folk songs. *Bhajans*—All religious groups in India love to sing bhajans which are short lyrics sung by a leader and repeated by the devotees/worshippers. Every word of the song is meant to stir the deep spiritual commitment of the worshipper. Sometimes bhajans are lyrical presentation of the Gospel story, especially parables. The leader of the bhajan will sit in the centre of the stage or sanctuary surrounded by his/her group, consisting of musicians and singers. *Kirtans*—Narration of stories from the Bible take place in the form of kirtans. These are similar to bhajans. The head singer will have hand cymbals for rhythm and he/she will be assisted by one or two others who provide music by beating *dakki* (drum) and repeat the song. This acting is also viewed as a dance. It is called by various names in different parts of the country such as *Kalakshepam*, *Katha-Kalakshepam*, *Harikatha*, or *Burrakatha*.

6. Christian Preaching and other Religions

In the midst of a pluralistic society, Christian preaching is seen as bearing witness to the saving power of the Gospel in Christ Jesus. It has two important elements—calling for a faith commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and edifying the community of believers in the faith and practice of the Church. The presence of other religions influence Christian Preachers to adopt both cultural and religious elements that can be effectively used for the preaching of the Gospel. It is seen as *witnessing to* and *sharing with* the people of other faiths.

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Our Schools, the Transforming Vehicles*

BISHOP PAULRAJ, Trichy

Lesson : St. Matthew 25 : 34-40

The message commences with the narration of an incident that had taken place in a teacher's life. One day the teacher went to a Government Office, to see the Officer at his office. When he was waiting for his chance to see the officer, the officer himself came to the place where he was seated. The teacher, astounded at the act of the officer who recognised him amidst other waiting people. He was overwhelmed with joy when he uttered the words that he was one of his old students. The officer began to recall his past by quoting, 'Sir, it was you who gave me a new Tamil book when I was found incapable of reading a Tamil Lesson No. 4, வாழைமரம் in the class as I was keeping an old Tamil book in which the lesson was missing. The officer continued, 'Sir, when I was weeping in the class, it was you who gave me a new book and encouraged me, it was your encouraging words that made me great in life, so as a mark of reverence I came to see you'.

Likewise we teachers are also called to serve society. We established many elementary schools, middle schools, High schools, Hr. Sec. schools and Colleges; why? 'The service to Society is service to God.'

Quoting the proverb, 'மக்களுக்கு செய்யும் சேவையே மகேசனுக்கு செய்யும் சேவை, ஏழையின் சிரிப்பில் இறைவன் இருக்கின்றான்,' The Bishop appealed to the teachers to serve the society.

Referring to the Lesson that was read (St. Matthew 25 : 34-40) the students who are in need of help to learn their lessons, who are in want of money to buy their books and notebooks, who are hungry and in desperate conditions etc., are people to be served by the teachers. Thus, he emphasized the theme that 'The Educational service is the Religious service' and 'The Educational Institutions are the Temples of knowledge'. To implement this we must have many Development Programmes. The conversion of

Elementary schools into Middle schools,
Middle schools into High schools,
High schools into Hr. Sec. schools,
Hr. Sec. schools into Colleges etc.,

are a few of our programmes to be implemented. The Bishop also mentioned in his message, one among the few of the Diocesan Programmes in the ministry of Education namely opening a college in Nagapattinam and an Institute to prepare the students to appear for IAS and IPS Examinations.

Stating another example, the Bishop said, 'A poor girl was struggling to pay the money for the Teachers' Training Course. At this hour of need, an old lady came forward to help her monetarily. As a result, the girl completed the teacher training course, got the job, and uplifted the entire family. One lady's help to one girl is magnified to a help to the entire family'. Likewise, the Institution must implement Development Programmes to do away with famine, poverty, dijection in life and other various problems of the present students. Library and Laboratory facilities can also be extended to those who are in need of these facilities. Widows and poor people, children of broken families and destitutes are certain other areas where we should focus our Development Programmes. That is how we should transform our society. Like the salt which is little in quantity add more taste to the food, our little help to the poor in our daily routine among our students would cause greater service to society.

Once again the Bishop made an appeal to the teachers, to do effective service to society, through the children of our Institution. He insisted that we must rededicate ourselves to this great mission.

'In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethern, ye have done it unto me.'

The message ended with the blessings of the Bishop for the long lines of the correspondents, Headmasters and teachers to do the Godly service to society.

*This devotion was conducted at the Teachers' Felicitation Function.



BOOK REVIEW

Gandhi on Christianity by ROBERT ELLSBERG (ed), (N. Y. Orbis books, 1991), pages 117.

Mohandas Gandhi, or as he later came to be revered as 'Mahatma' Gandhi, was one of the great moral prophets of our century. Gandhiji was a force to reckon with during his life time. His philosophy, his utterances, his life-style,—all of these drew the attention of the World community at large and he was a subject of discussion. He continues to be so even now. However, the Christian Missionaries and Indian Christians of the past were critical of Gandhiji on more than one count. The Indian Christians of the present are in no way different from their forebears in their attitude towards Gandhi. So much so, a fresh look at Gandhi is the need of the hour. This is the need that this book meets.

GANDHI AND CHRISTIANITY is an anthology which focuses on a less well-known area of Gandhi's interest: his engagement with Jesus and Christianity. As a Hindu, Gandhi did not accept the Christian dogma, but he recognized and revered Jesus as one of history's great prophets of non-violence. He has remained an enigmatic figure to Christians of the past and present. In other words, Gandhi has challenged Christians more than anybody else. But the truth, as this book makes out, is that Gandhian values and views are relevant to us even now.

The 'Introduction' by Ellsberg is an excellent piece. It highlights the different kind of challenge provided by Gandhi. It is rightly pointed out that Gandhi's difficulties with Christianity were at once theological and ethical. He could not bring himself to regard Jesus Christ as the only Son of God. The behaviour of Christians also left him doubtful that their religion had any superior claim to be uniquely true (p. xi). He was confirmed in his view that the message of Jesus and the teachings and practice of the Christian Church were two different things. For Gandhi, the 'Truth is God' and, this God is not to be found in a Himalayan cave, but precisely in the identification with the poorest of the poor, and in their struggle for dignity and well-being (p. xiii).

In the first part of this book, the different dimensions to the dialogue between Gandhi and Christianity are explored in Gandhi's own words. Gandhi's views on Christ, Christians and Christianity are presented in a systematic way. The selections are from Gandhi's own writings in *The Story of my experiment with Truth*, *Harijan*, *Speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, *Young India*, *The Modern Review*, *My Dear Child*, *Yervda Mandir* and from Mahadev Desai and Pyaralel. All of them primary sources.

This is, in the second part, followed by thoughtful reflections by four Christian thinkers. These thinkers,

in their critical commentaries, present Gandhi as they see him in his words and present him as such. The critical commentaries included in this book treat four types of challenge which Gandhi poses to contemporary Christians.

In chapter five of the second part, Diana. L. Eck, Moderator and Chair of the Working Group on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths, WCC, sees (p. 77-91) special relevance for the challenge of interreligious dialogue in Gandhi's thought as it 'emerges from and has been tested by a life of dialogue' (p. 78). It is a challenge in the sense that 'we must be able to glimpse what truth looks like' from the viewpoint of some one of another faith (p. 90).

In chapter six, Ignatius Jesudasan, S.J., Director of the Gandhian Society Villages Association, discover Gandhi's Christology in the context of the Christian concept of service to one's fellow humans, which was a guiding principle of his life. He sees Gandhi's challenge to Christians 'to the Christology of Jesus as servant rather than the Christology of the Church about Jesus as Lord' (p. 98). He points out that Max Weber analyzed the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of Capitalism, and that Marx took a committed stand for the dispossessed proletariat, but introduced a contradiction between religious faith and the process of social liberation, whereas Gandhi 'resolved the contradiction by making religious faith an ally and an instrument in the social and political liberation of humanbeing. Social and political liberation were correlative to spiritual liberation' (p. 99). That is, Gandhi is identified as a useful ally in formulating an authentic Asian Christian theology in terms of seeking a path open to inculturation, interreligious dialogue and solidarity with the oppressed is clearly brought out.

James W. Douglass, the Founder of the Ground Zero Community in Banger, Washington, sees the significance of Mahatma Gandhi in his entire life and being on the Christic reality of suffering love in the seventh chapter (p. 102). He provides an interesting and insightful discussion on *ebed Yanweh*, the Suffering Servant of God. He sees the revolution of peace being realized in Calcutta, not heaven, 'because only the wounded flesh and spilled blood of Calcutta can provide the matter of a new heaven and a new earth' (p. 108). He also brings to light the fact that Gandhi rejected a spirituality focussed on personal salvation. His quest for personal enlightenment was inseparable from the life of service and the commitment to social transformation. He sees the challenge from Gandhi to Christians in that the latter are to express their orthodoxy in terms of orthopraxis. He rightly points out that, for Gandhi, Jesus was not calling humanbeings to a new religion, but to a new life.

Finally, Bob McCahill, M.M., from whom the suggestion regarding this book originally arose, demonstrates yet another way in which the Sermon on the Mount may be lived in Gandhian terms. 'A life of service and uttermost simplicity is the best preaching' (p. 111, 117). Bob draws inspiration from Gandhi in this and finds a challenge to Christian Mission. He is open to the advice which Gandhi gave to the Missionaries: 'Do not preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you' (p. 114). Bob believes, with Gandhi, that 'there is one God and there are many paths to God'. Who can disagree with both of them? Gandhi demonstrated a life of dedication, concern for others and daring in the cause of God, while professing a faith other than Christianity. For all this, Bob cannot help but say: 'I thank God for Mahatma Gandhi' (p. 116).

Thus, Gandhi, whom we encounter alive in this book, is a very attractive and appealing one. The contributors

make Gandhi come alive and let him speak through the selections and, in their own critical write-ups see Gandhi *as he should be seen* and bring out his relevance. Gandhi's call to Indian Christians was to make them live as Christians rooted in Jesus' message, true citizens of India, with true patriotic and national sentiment and true participants in nation-building efforts. All these concerns are lucidly brought out in this book. However, other responses to Gandhi and critical commentaries on Gandhi by Christians from, for instance, a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Sikh or a Jain or even a Secularist would have certainly helped much. Nevertheless, this book is an enduring contribution made by the Orbis. This is certainly a book for all Christians who want to be relevant in context.

—REV. DR. FRANKLYN J. BALASUNDARAM
Bangalore

OBITUARY

Doreen Lillas Jerrold-Nathan

Doreen Nathan was born in 1927 and had a good Christian upbringing and lived and contributed much to her neighbourhood. She committed her life at a very early age and decided to be a missionary and had a great zeal for India and her people.

Doreen served as a missionary in the Physiotherapy Department of the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore. She arrived as a missionary in the early 1960's and after a good ministry in Vellore, moved into Madras to work in the Diocese of Madras. Bishop Newbegin appointed her as a Youth Worker and she had a profound spiritual influence on the young people. She worked as a colleague to Mr. Victor Pandian and Mr. Thomas George. In her ministry she was responsible for bringing many people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

She served God faithfully and served the Indian people with much love and devotion.

After retirement she was active in Adelaide and though age had gone by she still found her niche with young people and worked among the young people of Adelaide. She had great capacities to work, pray, study the word of God and be a witness to young people.

She then moved into Sydney and was suffering from cancer. We had the joy of having her for a meal with us and later visited her in a Sydney hospital. She was radiating the love and joy of Jesus Christ even in her illness. She was well prepared to meet her Master and passed away peacefully on the 13th February 1993.

On the 19th February she was cremated and after the service of cremation there was a lovely thanksgiving service to God for the life of Doreen Nathan, at Christ Church (Anglican), St. Ives, Sydney. At this memorial service there was Archbishop Donald Robinson, Bishop Dudley Foord and several dignitaries of the church, many family members and friends of Doreen. It was a lovely act of giving thanks to God for the life of a good and godly missionary.

One of the talks spoke of Doreen being caught by Jesus and Doreen also caught others for Jesus. That was a crisp and a good analogy of Doreen's life. The service on the 19th February was filled with thanksgiving and gratitude to God for the life of Doreen Nathan.

—BISHOP SUNDAR CLARKE

Australia

APRIL 1993

Church of South India Council for Education

RT. REV. DR. R. PAULRAJ,
Chairman.

PROFESSOR W.A.F. HOPPER,
Director.

I. Regional Workshops

The following have been done in the Dioceses :

S. No.	Diocese(s)	Title	Period	Venue
1.	Coimbatore]	Science Education for teachers handling standards III to V.	02-02-1993 to 06-02-1993	Coimbatore
2.	Madras and Vellore	Environmental Maths for teachers handling standards I to III.	02-02-1993 to 06-02-1993	Vellore
3.	Krishna-Godhavari	Science Education for teachers handling standards III to V.	22-02-1993 to 26-02-1993	Vijayawada
4.	Karnataka Northern and Karnataka Southern	Environmental Maths for teachers handling standards I to III.	22-02-1993 to 26-02-1993	Mangalore

II. Meeting of the Education Council :

This was held at the beautiful new CSI Centre on 12.2.93 at 2.00 p.m. under the Chairmanship of Rt. Rev. Dr. R. Paulraj. Our respected and beloved Moderator, Most Rev. Dr. Vasanth P. Dandin was gracious to make it convenient to participate in the Council meeting and provide excellent leadership. All the other Synod Officers attended the meeting except the General Secretary who was busy participating in another important meeting at ICSA, Madras. 23 members attended the meeting.

The Minutes of the meeting have been sent to all the members of the Council. Copies of the Minutes have also been sent to all the Diocesan Bishops for their information and follow-up action.

III. Meeting with Synod Officers, EZE Officials and Directors :

Our Moderator presided over the meeting organised by him at the new CSI Centre on 12.2.93 at 5.00 p.m. The major objective of the meeting was to plan for Consultations at different levels to redefine the roles of EZE and CSI as partners in developmental programmes in the Church.

IV. Meeting between W.A.F. Hopper and Ms. Claudia Koenig at Hotel Atlantic, Madras on 15-2-93 at 5.00 p.m.

This was a very pleasant meeting for about two hour with the official from EZE, Bonn. The major objective was to review the implementation of CORPED Programme in the Dioceses with reference to the following components :

- (a) improving on the school Curriculum and retraining of CORPED school teachers.

- (b) equipping CORPED schools to enable effective transaction of the improved curriculum to happen.
- (c) repairing and renovating school buildings, wherever necessary to provide better infrastructural facilities for efficient learning to take place.
- (d) role of CEWs in the Dioceses.
- (e) functioning of CECs in selected CORPED schools with reference to the following aspects :
 - (i) Tiny-Tots Education.
 - (ii) Parents' Education (focus on Mothers).
 - (iii) Supportive Education for School goers.
 - (iv) Education for drop-outs/left-outs/push-outs.
 - (v) Adult Functional Literacy Programme.
- (f) monitoring CORPED programme in the Dioceses.
- (g) local contribution from the Church (Dioceses).

V. Repairs and Renovations of School Buildings :

Our Civil Engineer visited the building sites along with Bishop D. P. Shettian, Diocese Engineer and other Diocesan Officers. Excellent work has been done in Karnataka Southern Diocese under the leadership of the Bishop. Many people from the local communities have come forward to give generously towards the work. The Second and final instalment of our grant has been released to the Diocese so that the work could be completed soon. As reported earlier, we have already sent the final instalments to Tirunelvely Diocese and East Kerala Diocese.

W. A. F. HOPPER
Director

WANTED

ALL INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION (AISSA)

(A related agency of N.C.C.I.)

AISSA aims at establishing close links with Sunday Schools of member churches of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) and other related organisations. Promoting Christian Education in and through Sunday Schools is the main concern of this Ecumenical body.

Invites applications from committed christian men and women for the following positions.

I. Associate General Secretary—1

- A graduate of any recognized university with Theological degree. Administrative experience preferred.
- Experience in Sunday Schools / Christian Education ministries for a period of 5-8 years. Age group 30-40 years.

Associate General Secretary will have the responsibility of a region with the additional responsibility to assist the General Secretary in the development and monitoring of programmes.

- Salary and emoluments amount to Rs. 3,000 per month.

II. Regional Secretaries—2

- A graduate of any recognized university with Theological degree.
- Minimum of 5 years experience with Sunday Schools/Christian Education ministries. Age group 25-40 years
- Salary and emoluments amount to Rs. 2,150 per month.

Associate General Secretary and Regional Secretaries are to be a team with the General Secretary to cater to and facilitate the Sunday School ministries and Christian Nurture programme throughout India working through member churches of NCCI and other related organisations.

The Regions are South India, North India and North East India. Depending on the candidates and keeping the interests of the AISSA the headquarters for these positions will be fixed.

III. Accountant—1

- A graduate in Commerce with a sound experience of 5-10 years.
- Salary and emoluments amount to Rs. 1,800 with headquarters at Secunderabad/Hyderabad with the responsibility for financial control and office management.

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The Rev. S. Joshua Inbakumar,
General Secretary,
All India Sunday School Association,
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Secunderabad-500 003,
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on or before 25th April 1993 along with the recommendations from the head of the Church/Institution/Organisation/Regional Christian Councils.

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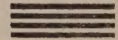
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